

Lower Merion School District

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

No.: 810
Section: OPERATIONS
Title: STUDENT TRANSPORTATION
Date Last Revised: 12/18/23; 2/16/16; 10/23/15; 10/7/14; 6/20/05

R810 STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

I. Definitions

“**Student**” shall mean a school-aged child whose legal residence(s) is located within the District.

“**Elementary school student**” shall mean a student in kindergarten through fourth grade.

“**Secondary school student**” shall mean a student in fifth through twelfth grade.

“**Late bus**” shall mean a bus regularly scheduled to depart school after normal school hours

“**School bus**” means a motor vehicle that is used for the transportation of elementary or secondary school students to or from public, private or parochial schools or events related to such schools or school-related activities irrespective of size.

II. Students for Whom Transportation Shall Be Provided

1. Elementary school students who must travel by public highway more than three-quarters (3/4) of a mile, middle school students who must travel by public highway or publicly accessible pathways more than one (1) mile, and high school students who must travel by public highway or publicly accessible pathways more than one and one-half (1.5) mile, to or from the school to which the students are assigned within their school attendance area. The District reserves the right to extend this boundary by a distance of no more than 1/10 mile in the event that the distance would place the cut-off in the middle of the street or similar boundary point.
2. Students who are enrolled in a non-public school which is not operated for profit and which is located within the District boundaries or outside the District boundaries at a distance not exceeding ten (10) miles by the nearest public road. The distance requirements as specified in paragraph A.1. also apply to students enrolled in non-public schools.
3. Students with transportation specified in the student’s Individualized Education Program or service agreement.

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4. Students who are enrolled in a vocational-technical school.
5. Students who reside within the three-quarters (3/4), one (1) mile, and one and one-half (1.5) mile limits, as specified in paragraph A.1., but whose walking routes constitute a hazard to the students when so certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.
6. Students who are picked up or dropped off at a destination other than their home on a daily basis for the purpose of childcare. The parents/guardians of such students must submit a written request no less than annually to the District's transportation department as set forth in the accompanying regulation. The following conditions also must be met:
 - a. Such students must board or disembark at an existing stop on the regularly scheduled bus route within the attendance area of the student's school;
 - b. There must be space available on the bus;
 - c. Such students will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis;
 - d. Such students may not continue to ride the bus if other students, eligible for transportation under the foregoing provisions, are assigned to the bus causing the bus to reach its rated capacity; and
 - e. The request must be for a minimum of two months on a consecutive, daily basis, Monday through Friday.
7. Students with multiple residences whose parents/guardians provide evidence of joint custody using the following standards:
 - a. For students whose parents/guardians both reside within the District's boundaries and share physical custody of the student equally, transportation will be provided to both residences only to the extent required by law and based on a schedule provided to the student's principal.

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- b. Where required by a student's Individualized Education Program whose parents/guardians both reside within the District, transportation will be provided to both residences based on a schedule provided to the student's principal.
 - c. For resident students attending non-public schools whose parents/guardians both reside in the District, transportation will be provided to both locations based on a schedule provided to the student's principal.
 - d. Transportation will not be provided to the residence of a parent/guardian located outside the District's boundaries.
 - e. In those cases where a student is transported to multiple residences it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to advise the student's principal as to which residence the student is to be transported sufficiently in advance as determined by the principal.
8. Students whose parents/guardians have received permission to enroll them in a school other than the school which serves their attendance area are not eligible for transportation to and from school.
9. Late bus transportation is provided to secondary public school students who participate in after school extracurricular programs.
10. Transportation for District-sponsored extracurricular events is provided to secondary public school students. Transportation to and from extracurricular activities is provided to elementary and secondary school students with disabilities whenever participation in these activities is specified in an Individualized Education Program or Section 504/Chapter 15 Service Agreement.
11. Transportation for field and class trips is provided to public school students.
12. Students may either transport themselves or be transported to and from Cooperative Work Experience (Co-Op) and/or Educational Field Experience (EFE) work sites under the following conditions:

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- a. A student may transport themselves to and from a Co-Op/EFE work site if the student presents a note from the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) acknowledging that the student may do so. Such students must present evidence to the school principal of adequate insurance coverage as determined by the District's Business Manager.
 - b. A student may be transported by another student to and from a Co-Op/EFE work site if the student who is to be transported presents a note from the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) acknowledging that the student may be so transported. A student who transports another student(s) must present evidence to the school principal of adequate insurance coverage as determined by the District's Business Manager.
 - c. A student who is transported by private vehicle to and from a Co-Op/EFE work site, and who participates in a student activity, must use transportation provided by the District for such activities. Any exceptions to such a condition must be made in writing by the school principal or their designee.
 - d. Such other conditions as shall be established by the District.
13. The District may utilize procedures in line with the Pennsylvania School Code to allow students the option to use alternate transport in place of the District-provided bus, such as providing parking passes to students who elect and qualify to drive to school. To the extent allowed by the school code, acceptance of alternate transportation forfeits a student's right to ride a District-provided bus.

III. Opt-Out Program

The District may utilize a voluntary opt-out program which is designed for families of school-aged children who are eligible for school district transportation per Section II., above, but do not plan on taking the school bus in order to get to or from school during the school year. This program would be instituted to help the District optimize travel time on the school bus routes, identify appropriate bus stops, and allow for more consistent and efficient transportation service. Also, it may allow the District to minimize the additional number of vehicles in service, thereby freeing up funds for other educational purposes, instead of transportation.

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The transportation opt-out program will not impact a student’s ability to ride a late bus or other district provided transportation to attend field trips, athletics events, emergency evacuations, etc. Families who opt-out will also be responsible for ensuring that their children are transported to or from school on school days with delayed openings or early dismissals.

The District will issue an opt-out form no later than March 30 of the school year prior to when the opt-out would apply. Opt-out will be available on an on-going basis. Should unforeseen circumstances arise and a family needs school bus transportation, the District protocol will allow for families to request reinstatement of those services, which shall be provided no more than 10 business days from the request, unless circumstances prevent such reinstatement under the approval of the Superintendent or their designee.

IV. Additional Guidelines

1. With the approval of the Lower Merion Board of School Directors, the District shall annually establish school bus routes which shall be in effect during the ensuing school year. Bus stops shall be established with due regard for safety and efficiency. The Superintendent or their designee shall periodically review bus stops for safety and logistical efficiency and change bus stop locations if deemed necessary. The District is not able to select bus stop locations or to schedule pick-up or drop-off times based on parent/guardian convenience or preference.
2. School bus drivers shall not permit any animals (other than service animals), weapons, explosives, or anything of a dangerous or objectionable nature as determined by the bus driver on the bus while transporting students.
3. Gym bags, school projects or similar items shall not be permitted on the school bus unless they can be held on the student’s lap without endangering the safety of other students. Students boarding a bus carrying an aforementioned item which the bus driver determines to be in violation of this regulation shall be warned by the driver verbally and in writing by means of a Bus Conduct Report. At the discretion of the bus driver, a student boarding a bus carrying an aforementioned item in violation of this Administrative Regulation may not be permitted to board the bus with the unauthorized item.
4. The school bus is considered school property; therefore, students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with LMSD Policy 235 (Students Rights and Responsibilities), while riding a school bus. The bus driver will reprimand students for

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minor infractions. Serious or recurring minor infractions will be reported to the appropriate school principal by use of a written Bus Conduct Report. The principal shall investigate the report and administer appropriate discipline as outlined in LMSD Policy 235. Annually, school bus safety regulations shall be published on the District's website. School bus safety regulations shall also be posted in each bus. At the start of each school year bus drivers will review the school bus safety regulations with students and advise them of the consequences for violations.

5. Buses shall be loaded as close to capacity as possible using the following guidelines:
 - a. The District will endeavor to assign secondary school students to buses at the rate of two students per seat; however, in no circumstance will the District assign more than three secondary students per seat.
 - b. Buses transporting elementary school students exclusively will be assigned to buses at the rate of three students per seat.
 - c. The Superintendent or their designee may, based on operational experience, assign students to buses at rates in excess of the above guidelines.
6. Transportation hubs and shuttle systems are established to promote efficient and cost-effective routes for school students.
7. Non-public schools may request early dismissal transportation services for the same number of days as are designated early dismissal in the annually approved Lower Merion School District calendar. Such service will be provided if the dismissal does not interfere with regularly scheduled transportation. Non-public schools shall notify the Lower Merion Transportation Department, prior to a date in June of each year established by the Transportation Department, of the early dismissal days for which they are requesting transportation.
8. Annually, instruction in school bus safety, conducted by Transportation Department personnel, will be provided to all elementary public school students. To the fullest practical extent, similar instruction will be provided to elementary non-public students.

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9. Students assigned to school buses equipped with seat belts must wear the belts at all times during transportation. Bus drivers and, if assigned, bus aides are responsible for ensuring compliance.
10. Students may ride only the bus to which they are assigned. Permission to ride another bus may be granted by the student's principal for emergency purposes. A note granting such permission, signed by the principal or their designee, must be presented to the driver before boarding the alternate bus. A note from a parent/guardian is not acceptable.
11. Students in kindergarten through eighth grade may only board and disembark at their designated bus stops. Students in ninth through twelfth grade may board and disembark at any established bus stop on their assigned bus.
12. In accordance with regulations of the Pennsylvania Department of Education and the Public Utilities Commission, vehicles owned by the Lower Merion School District shall not be used commercially or for any purpose other than school district authorized services or activities.
13. Students may ride with musical instruments only if they can be placed under the seat or held in the student's lap without endangering the safety of other students. No musical instruments will be permitted to be in the aisle, behind the driver's seat or taking up any part of a seat designated for students.
 - a. The following instruments are too large to be safely transported on school buses: baritone sax, baritone horn, bass trombone, cello, drums, electric bass, electric piano, marimba, mellophonium, sousaphone, string bass, tuba, vibraharp, xylophone, and amplifier system.
 - b. Students carrying any of the aforementioned musical instruments/accessories shall not be permitted to board a bus going to and from school. Schools are responsible for providing information and guidelines to parents/guardians and students regarding the transportation of musical instruments on school buses. Instructions regarding the transportation of musical instruments to and from school shall be provided to drivers, teachers, families and students who participate in the music programs.